

IV.—A LOST ANGLO-SAXON INSCRIPTION RECOVERED

J. D. Cowen and Elisabeth Barty

In 1778 Marmaduke Tunstall esq., F.R.S., F.S.A., of Wycliffe Hall, the eighteenth century collector (1743-1790) who founded a well known private museum of natural history and antiquities, discovered in a pile of stones lying by the roadside "abt. halfway between Wycliffe & Greta Bridge" the upper part of an Anglian cross-shaft, which on one face carried an inscription. On enquiry he learned that the stone had been for some time in the wall of a lime-kiln, a short distance from the place where it was found; and he observed "it does not seem to be of the native Stone of the Country".

Shortly after, at some time between 30 January 1780 and 22 March 1781, he found "very near the same place" a second Anglian stone, much weathered but carved with figure subjects on the front face, and with panels of interlacing down the back and sides. This too was a fragment of a cross-shaft, very probably (as we shall see) of later date than the first. The finder learned that "it had long served as a common Stone in a very thick Wall, lately taken down".

These discoveries, with others not relevant here, Mr. Tunstall made known to the Society of Antiquaries of London in two letters, which were read at the Society's ordinary meetings on 3 February 1780, and 22 March 1781. The original letters do not appear to have survived, but very full abstracts were entered in the Minute Books of the Society (Vols. XVI and XVII). Inserted with the minute of the first letter is a neatly etched drawing of the inscribed stone made for the writer by his friend Mr. Hutchinson;¹ with the

¹ Probably William Hutchinson (1732-1814), the well known local historian of the northern counties.

second is a competent little sketch in grey wash (pl. V, figs. 1 and 2).

That Tunstall was unable to make out a reading of the inscription raises the presumption that he was unfamiliar with Anglo-Saxon, for the slightest acquaintance with Anglo-Saxon forms should easily have given him the general sense of a memorial to a dead person. Instead he deemed the language to be Latin, and the stone itself to be a Votive Altar. "Many of the Letters", he adds, "seem to be of the earlier times, yet the Gothic Scrawl at the Top should seem to denote it of later times, perhaps as low as the Saxon or Danish". His Gothic Scrawl is, of course, part of a triquetra-interlace, and here at least his judgment was correct.

Of the second stone he made even less, saying only "the Sculpture, resembling a Man on Horseback, and a very uncouth Figure of an Animal, (probably meant for a wild Boar) underneath, seems to show it of pretty high Antiquity, though in barbarous Ages, which he conjectures has been in honour of some mighty Hunter". The stone is now even more heavily weathered than in Tunstall's day, and all one can say is that his account of the figure-sculpture is as likely to be right as any other.

At this time Richard Gough was busy collecting materials for his new edition of Camden's *Britannia*, and he did not fail to pick up the record of Tunstall's discoveries. The work appeared in 1789, and at the appropriate point he included a brief note of the essential facts. He offered no further attempt at interpretation, but his merit was to include also very creditable reproductions of the two illustrations supplied by Tunstall with his letters (pl. VI).² From this first printed source all later references to the inscription are, directly or indirectly, derived.

The inscription was next noticed by Father D. H. Haigh

² Gough's *Camden*, ed. 1789, Vol. III, 95; pl. V, figs. 7 and 8. In the 1806 edition of his work both text and figures were repeated unaltered; ed. 1806, Vol. III, 340; pl. XIX, figs. 7 and 9.

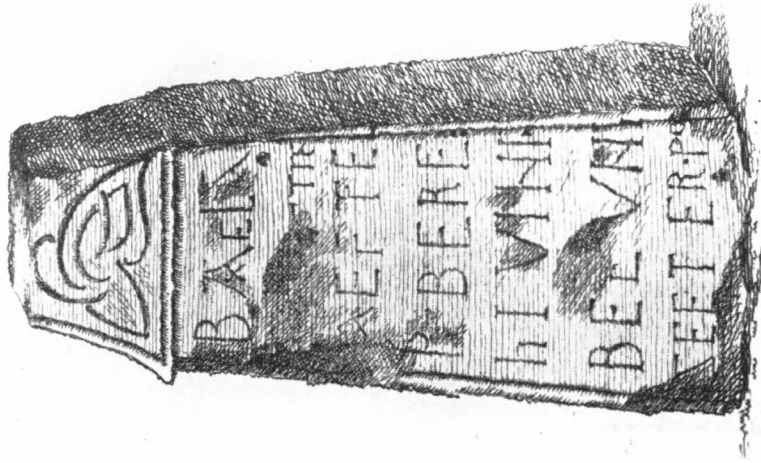


Fig. 1. Etching by Hutchinson, 1780 (1:1)



Fig. 2. Wash drawing, 1781 (1:1)

in his well known account of the Bewcastle Cross.³ An Anglo-Saxon scholar, he there for the first time gave a reading of Gough's plate of Tunstall's figure, and established that it belonged to a group of Anglo-Saxon inscriptions cast in the formula "So-and-so raised this in memory of So-and-so, a beacon in memory of his father (or other person)".

With Gough's plate as his only source he read the inscription thus:

BAEDA
 ...T..
 AEFTE
 RBERC
 HTVINI
 BECVN
 AEFTERF

He interpreted the text as a seventh or eighth century memorial formula in alliterative verse, reconstructing it as follows:

Bæda [the settæ]	Bæda [this set]
Aefter Berchtuini	after Berchtuini
Becun aefter f[athoræ]	a beacon after [his father
Gebidæd der saule]	pray for the soul]

His reading of one or two of the letters is optimistic, and his insertions are hypothetical, but the general sense is certain. His text has been adopted by all later commentators.

A decade later Professor George Stephens included the inscription in his *Corpus of Runic Monuments*, referring both to Gough's *Camden* and to Haigh, and adopting Haigh's reading, which he simply reprinted.⁴ All this is derivative, but his comment is worth quoting:

"Dr. Charlton informs me that this monument has not been found in this century, and is probably destroyed. I

³ *Arch. Ael.* 2, I (1856), 156.

⁴ G. Stephens, *The Old-Northern Runic Monuments . . .*, I (Copenhagen, 1866-7), 476E.

therefore only admit it (as we cannot depend on details in Gough's copy) in illustration of the word BECUN on the Dewsbury and Falstone stones, and of the general funeral formulas on our oldest monuments. Not being in Runes, it is only of interest here for this particular purpose. Consequently—the stone being lost and no trustworthy drawing, as to minutiae, remaining—I merely give the letters in modern Roman characters as now printed”.⁵ The date he suggested was: “? About 700-800”.

The Dr. Charlton here referred to can be no other than Dr. Edward Charlton, Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne from 1846-1870, a man of wide learning with a special interest in Northern archaeology, and a profound knowledge of local antiquities.⁶ No man of his time was more likely to have known the whereabouts of such a stone than he.

The text appears again in Professor Emil Hübner's Corpus of the early Christian Inscriptions of Britain.⁷ He quotes only the authorities already noted, and adopts Haigh's reading, though in printing it an attempt is made to copy the form, size, and spacing of the letters. His suggested restoration of line 2 as [*presby*]t(er) is in any case hypothetical, and probably inadmissible. While he adds nothing to our knowledge, he was at all events a good enough scholar to have his reading checked by Knight Watson, Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of London, against the original etching in the Antiquaries' Minute Book. As to the date he makes no suggestion.

Finally, in his many studies of sculptured stones of the Anglo-Saxon and Viking periods, W. G. Collingwood twice refers to our inscription. First in his comprehensive survey of the material from the North Riding of Yorkshire;⁸ and

⁵ And as Haigh had done.

⁶ For a bibliography of his published works see *Arch. Ael.* 3, X (1913), 200-202.

⁷ *Inscriptiones Britanniae Christianae*, Berlin and London 1876, No. 187 on p. 68.

⁸ *Yorks. Arch. Journ.*, XIX (1907), 413.

again in his more summary presentation in the Victoria County History.⁹ On the first occasion he quotes only Stephens, on the second Hübner also; and he makes no mention of the primary authority, Gough, to whom he does not seem to have referred. Without offering any reason he assigns the stone to his earliest group, the "Anglian Series" (7th-9th centuries).

In his North Riding survey, however, he records also the existence of half-a-dozen other carved stones of the Anglo-Saxon period then preserved in the rectory coach-house at Wycliffe (1905), having been taken out of the fabric of the church at a restoration. This at least relieves us of the necessity to look any further afield for the source of our two stones. Wycliffe and Greta Bridge are only two miles apart as the crow flies, and a trip of a mile or so would be nothing out-of-the-way for a cartload of useful building stones.

In all this story no one since Tunstall has ever claimed to have studied the inscription at first hand, and in 1866/67 Edward Charlton roundly declared it to have been lost since before 1800.¹⁰ Yet it is certain that at some point in all this time *someone* knew where it was. In the Library of the Society of Antiquaries there is preserved an admirably executed paper squeeze of the text, worked up in pencil (pl. VIII). It is mounted in a folio volume of miscellaneous prints and drawings entitled "Inscriptions Vol. I" (f. 19), and probably put together, to judge by the style of the binding, in the 1870s or 1880s. This squeeze has no history, but on one corner someone has written "Oy. English"; and in the margin a later hand has noted the correct attribution, no doubt from Gough. The use of squeezes to decipher inscriptions, and as a record, was known from at least the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹¹ But this example

⁹ *Yorkshire*, II (1912), 128.

¹⁰ The sculptured stone has not again been mentioned, even by Collingwood, since 1806.

¹¹ Henry Howard of Corby Castle made paper squeezes of the inscriptions on the Bridekirk Font and the Bewcastle Cross before April, 1801. *Archæologia* XIV, 114-115, 118.

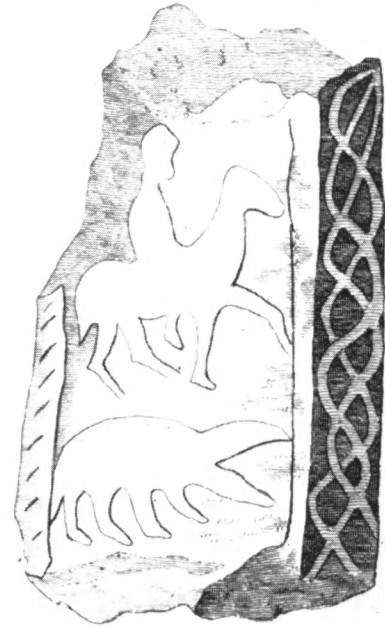
hardly looks as old as that, and probably dates from the second half of the century. Pending further evidence, however, its presence at Burlington House remains unexplained.

The natural trail for local workers to follow in any attempt to locate the two stones proved to lead only to a dead-end. It is well known that a year after Tunstall's death in 1790 the whole of his collection was bought by George Allan, F.S.A., and removed to Blackwell Grange, Darlington; after Allan's death in 1800 the collection remained at the Grange until, in 1822, it was bought for the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne. Here, in the course of the next decade, the contents were divided between the Lit. and Phil. Society, the Society of Antiquaries, and the newly formed Natural History Society. Yet neither in the very full and conscientiously compiled catalogue of the Allan Collection, made by G. T. Fox on the occasion of the acquisition for Newcastle, is there any mention of the Saxon stones;¹² nor were they to be found in the possession of any of the three societies. The trail had gone dead.

Yet Fox's very silence should have offered a clue. For the truth is that after their acquisition by Tunstall the stones had never moved at all. In 1933 the late S. E. Harrison, curator of the Bowes Museum, noticed the inscription built into the outer face of the wall of an outbuilding at Wycliffe Hall (pl. VII), and recognised it for what it was.¹³ At the same time he found the uninscribed sculpture lying loose and unprotected in the neighbourhood of the Hall; this Mr. C. U. Peat, the owner, kindly presented to the Bowes Museum, where it remains. It is to Harrison's discernment that we owe the recovery of both these stones; and it is in belated tribute to his memory that this account of his find is now published.

¹² G. T. Fox, *Synopsis of the Newcastle Museum*, 1827—a mine of information on the history and contents of these early collections and their devolution down to 1827.

¹³ It has since been moved to the inner face of a wall in the Hall itself.



Gough's versions of Pl. V, Figs. 1 and 2, 1789 (1:1)



The Inscription in Situ, 1933 (under ¼)



Squeeze of the Inscription, undated (under $\frac{1}{2}$)

The Society of Antiquaries of London



Drawing of the Inscription, by E. B., 1965 (under 1)

Shading indicates worn surface



Fig. 1. Face



Fig. 2. Back

The Inscribed Stone

The stone consists of the upper part of the shaft of a cross, and a portion of the lower limb of the head, the whole carved from a single piece (pl. VII). It is rectangular in section, broken at top and bottom, and in its present state measures some 19 by 8½ inches. Both head and shaft are furnished with a marginal line cut about half an inch from the edge to simulate a plain moulding, and giving a panelled effect to the respective fields. The lower limb of the cross is filled with a knot of interlacing carried out in the same incised technique. What remains of the pattern, and the technique in which it is executed, fit best a date between about 725-850.¹⁴

J.D.C.

The Inscription

The incised margin surrounding the shaft leaves a panel now 14½ inches deep by 7 inches wide. In this are incised the seven remaining lines of text (pls. VIII and IX. The letters vary in size, being about 1½ inches high by ½ an inch wide. The surface is in bad condition, and appears not only to be in a worse state of preservation than when the stone was found, but also to have deteriorated since 1933. The text is incomplete at the end; the letters of the last remaining line are crowded together, perhaps suggesting that it was the penultimate one. The text may now be read as follows:¹⁵

[.]¹ B A [A⁵]
 [...]
 [...⁶] F T E
 [R¹⁰.] B [E R] E¹⁵
 H T V [I N²⁰] I:
 B E C²⁵ V N [:]
 [A E³⁰] F T E [R. ³⁵]

¹⁴ See also below, p. 69.

¹⁵ Transliterated according to the following system: A indicates that a letter is worn, [A] that it can be supplied from the remaining traces or the context. [...] indicates that one letter is lost, [...] that several are lost. : indicates a symbol dividing words.

There are some six letters lost in the second line, where the older drawings seem to show they were of smaller size. One or two more are lost in the third line, preceding letter 6. Letter 1 may have been a cross. Possible readings of letter 4 are D, H, N, CI, or LI. Letter 11 may have been a word-division symbol, while 35 was a letter beginning with a vertical stroke.

By comparison with the earlier records, this gives the following text:

[+] ba[d]a . . . [a]efter berehtvini: becvn: aeftor . . .
 “[+] Ba[d]a [?set this] in memory of Berehtwine,
 a monument in memory of . . .”

This is an example of a fairly frequent OE memorial formula, occurring on both runic and non-runic stones.¹⁶ The usual verb is (*ge*)*settan*, though *ārāran* also occurs; either would fit into the second line here, leaving the first for the commissioner's name. There is insufficient room for the demonstrative pronoun suggested by Haigh.¹⁷ The formula generally ends with a noun of family relationship, and a request for prayer. Like other such inscriptions, this may have been in alliterative verse. A complete example is the Great Urswick runic stone:

† tunwini seta æfter toroʒtreda bekun æfter his
 bæurnæ gebidæs þer saulæ¹⁸

“†Tunwine raised this in memory of Torogtred, a monument in memory of his son; pray for his soul.”

The language of the text shows Anglian smoothing in the stem vowels of *becun*, *bereht-*; the intrusive vowel in *bereht-* is also more common in Anglian texts. This confirms the stone's location in the Northumbrian dialect area.

¹⁶ There are about thirteen other extant examples.

¹⁷ Rev. D. H. Haigh, “The Saxon Cross at Bewcastle”, *Arch. Ael.* 2, I (1856), 156.

¹⁸ R. I. Page, “Language and Dating in OE Inscriptions”, *Anglia* LXXVII (1959), 402.

Of the possible readings of the first word, only *bada* is recorded as a name, which Redin connects with OE *beadu* "war".¹⁹ OE *bana* "slayer" might give an unrecorded name, but this and names in *-ia* are less likely, while **baha* is phonologically improbable. The alliteration supports a name in *b-*, rather than one beginning with a vowel. The inflexion of *berehtvini* is more likely to be accusative singular than dative singular,²⁰ and is an early feature; but there is no other linguistic evidence for dating the text.

The script is seriffed AS capitals, employing angular C and miniscule H. The A appears lop-sided, and has the rare crossing of the crossbar only elsewhere recorded on the Sittingbourne knife.²¹ There is some word-division with one dot, but to what extent is now uncertain.

A comparison with other memorial inscriptions of this sort suggests that the most likely date is C8/C9; with this conclusion language, script, and carving are all consistent.

E.B.

The Uninscribed Sculpture

This is a section from the shaft of a cross of much coarser workmanship, and of later date, than the inscription. It is badly weathered, and has in addition been severely knocked about. It is rectangular in section, 21 inches long, 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ tapering to 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, and 8 inches deep. On the face are the remains (apparently) of the figure of a man mounted on a horse (pl. X, fig. 1). Tunstall's statement that underneath is "a very uncouth Figure of an Animal (probably meant for a wild Boar)" it is impossible either to confirm or to deny; it remains a possibility. The back carries a simple interlacing of three strands in fairly sharp

¹⁹ M. Redin, *Studies on Uncompounded Personal Names in Old English*, (Upsala, 1919), 44.

²⁰ R. I. Page, "Northumbrian *æfter* (=in memory of)+accusative", *Studia Neophilologica* XXX (1958), 149-51.

²¹ D. M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork 700-1100 in the British Museum* (London, 1964), 172-3, pl. XXX, no. 80. See also R. I. Page, *ibid.*, Appendix A: "The Inscriptions", 86.

relief (pl. X, fig. 2); both sides carry identical patterns, but more tightly drawn to fit into the narrower space. The edges are finished with a cable moulding.

The interlaces on the back and sides are all of the loose, stringy, and rather clumsily executed type associated with the period after the Danish invasions. The stone is, therefore, probably of the tenth, perhaps of the eleventh, century.

J.D.C.

The authors jointly acknowledge with gratitude the help they have received from all to whom they have turned in the course of compiling this notice. Their thanks are in particular due to Mr. C. U. Peat, of Wycliffe Hall, for his generosity in giving full facilities for the examination of the inscription in his house, and for allowing it to be photographed and drawn for publication; to Mr. Frank Atkinson, Museums Director, County Council of Durham, at The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, for supplying photographs of the sculptured stone in that museum; and to The Society of Antiquaries of London for permission to reproduce material—partly unpublished—in their collections.